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# Afghanistan Situation Report

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24 July 1984

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## AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT

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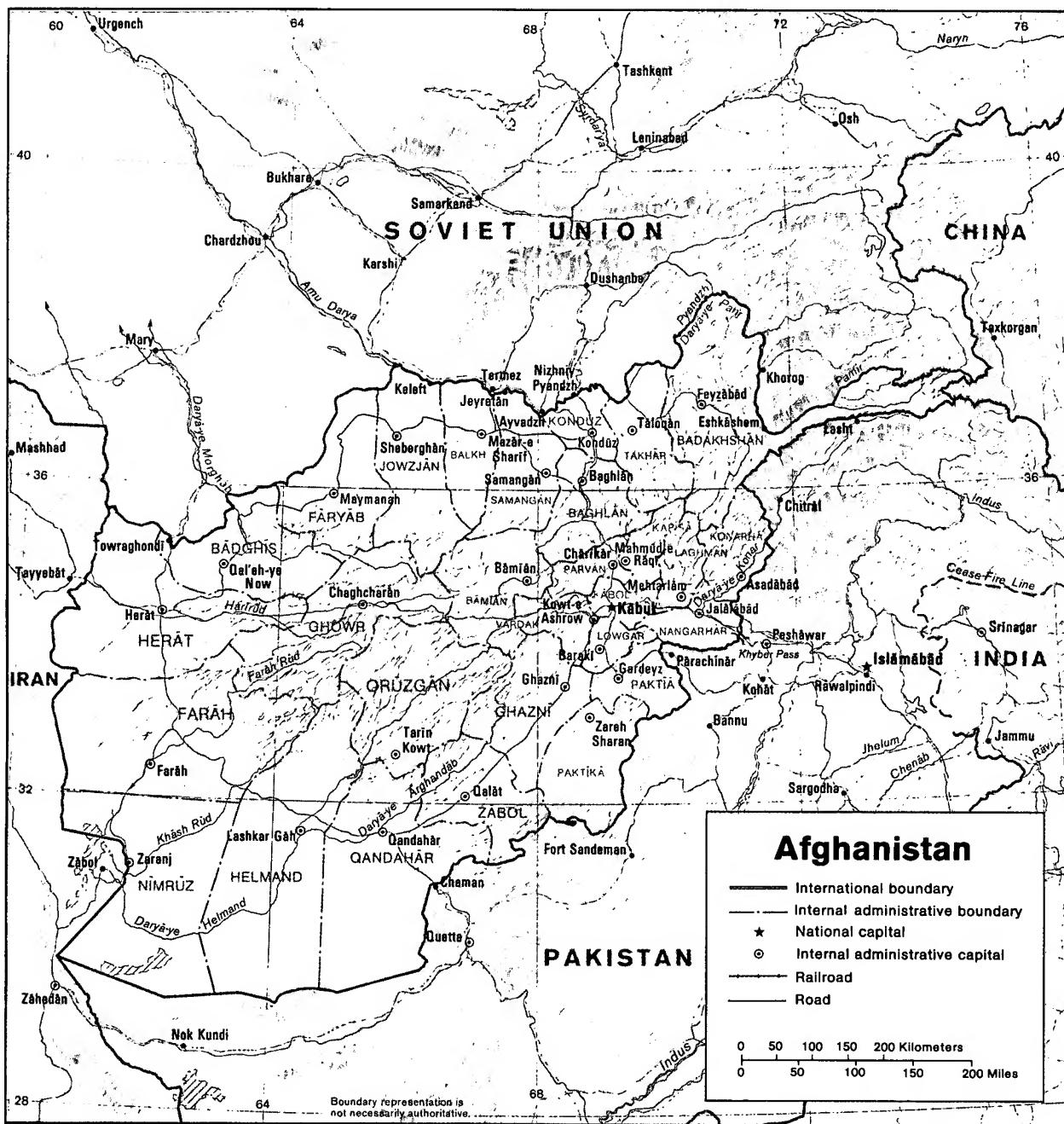
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**REGIME PERSONNEL CHANGES, FACTIONAL FIGHTING**

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[redacted] President Babrak Karmal, Defense Minister Qader, Communications Minister Watanjar, and other high-level officials have recently been involved in serious disagreements, some involving shootings. Press reports indicate, moreover, that Finance Minister Wakhil was recently replaced and that Babrak left Kabul to get medical treatment in Moscow. [redacted]

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**Comment:**

Babrak's trip, probably a routine visit preceding his annual vacation in the Crimea, may have prompted some of the rumors of disagreements in the leadership. Such rumors, however, have also foreshadowed party plenums and attendant leadership changes. Moreover, the rumors have coincided with reports of increased assassinations of party members in Kabul. Together, the rumors and reports of assassinations suggest that Interior Minister Gulabzoi, the head of the Khalqi faction, has ended an accord he reportedly reached with Babrak last winter to improve factional relations in the Afghan party. [redacted]

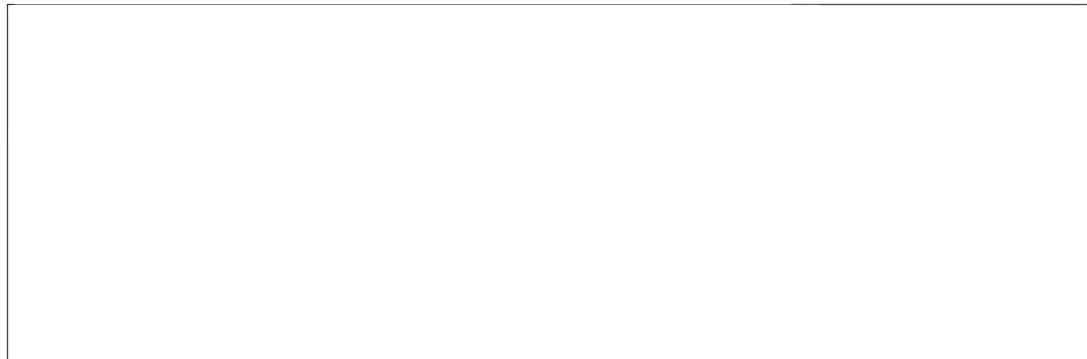
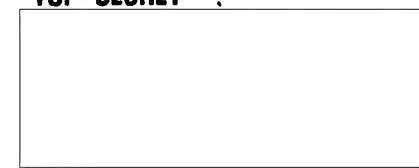
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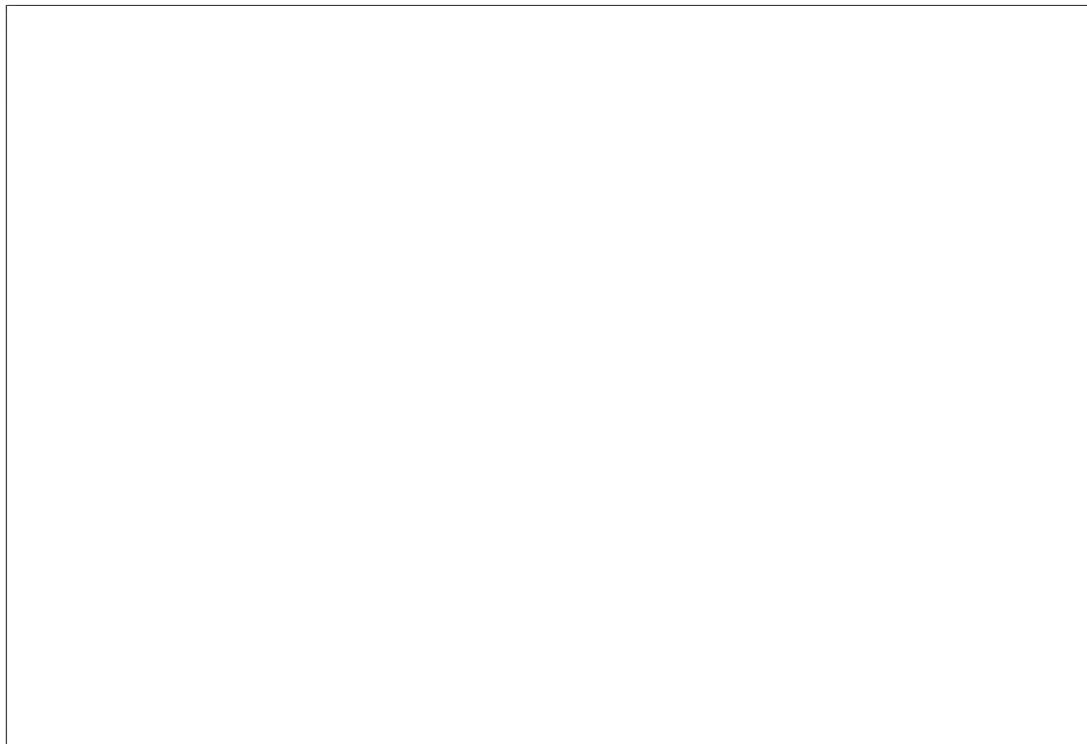
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**FIGHTING AND FOOD SHORTAGES IN THE HAZARAJAT**

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**[redacted] heavy fighting in recent months between Iranian-backed and other insurgent groups has caused food shortages in the Hazarajat region. One incident in Gereshk,**

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along the main highway from Qandahar to Herat, reportedly resulted in 350 insurgent casualties. [redacted]

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**Comment:**

The fighting in the Hazarajat, sparsely populated and generally self-sufficient in food, is a result of longstanding differences between the patchwork of nationalities inhabiting the region, exacerbated by Iranian influence. [redacted]

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**REEMERGENCE OF NUR** [redacted]

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Nur Ahmad Nur, the number two man in the PDPA, has reemerged after allegedly having been exiled to the USSR early this year for his role in fueling party factionalism. Last month he published a major article on the PDPA in a leading Soviet journal, claiming membership increased last year from 90,000 to 115,000. [redacted]

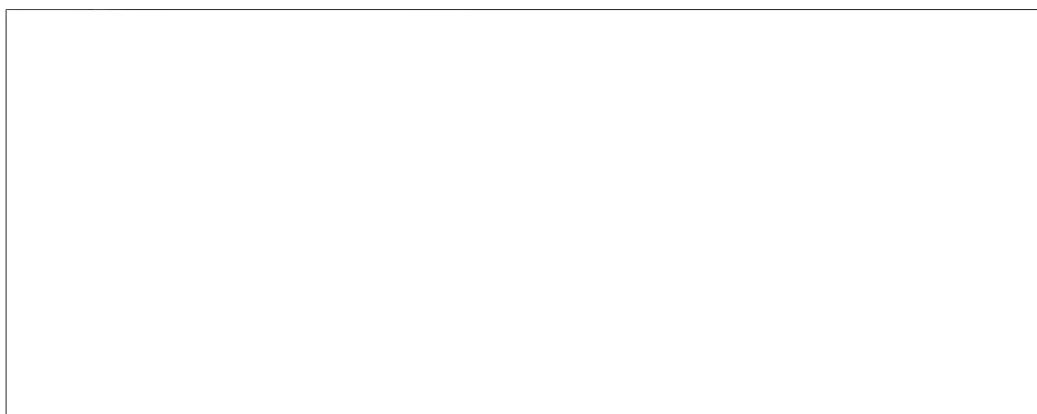
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**Comment:**

Nur's reappearance suggests he is still a force to be reckoned with. [redacted]

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**PERSPECTIVE****INTERNATIONAL COSTS OF THE SOVIET OCCUPATION**

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Most political and economic sanctions imposed on the USSR for invading Afghanistan have now been rescinded, and Moscow appears willing to pay the residual international costs of continuing to try to subjugate the country. The occupation reinforced international perceptions of Soviet aggressiveness, fueled a Western defense buildup, made Islamic and other Third World countries more wary of Soviet intentions, and hampered Moscow's efforts to exploit the Nonaligned Movement. Restrictions on Soviet trade also gained impetus from the invasion. Time and more recent international developments have eroded attention to Afghanistan, however, and made the occupation less of a factor in Moscow's foreign political and economic relations. Soviet officials probably think that the political and security liabilities of a withdrawal from Afghanistan would more than offset the gains.

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**Third World**

The occupation aligned against Moscow many nations that normally try to avoid making choices between East and West. The invasion galvanized the Third World against Soviet policy in a way that previous Soviet interventions, such as Czechoslovakia, had not done because a founding member of the Nonaligned Movement was invaded. The invasion was "strongly deplored" by 104 members of the UN General Assembly in January 1980, and the USSR continues to pay a political price in annual UN votes against its position by even larger majorities than the first vote.

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Long-term Soviet efforts to steer the Nonaligned Movement into positions contrary to Western interests were seriously damaged by the occupation. Cuba had become titular head of the movement three months before the invasion and was in a position to make pro-Soviet pronouncements in the name of nonaligned countries. However, the hostile reaction to Afghanistan prompted moderate members to act more forcibly against Cuban activism on behalf of Soviet causes than they might otherwise have done. Members of the International Parliamentary Union, which is numerically dominated by the Third World, also became less amenable to pro-Soviet initiatives.

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The 40 nations in the Islamic Conference reacted most strongly among Third World countries and have played a key role in setting the critical tone of nonaligned responses to the invasion. These countries saw the invasion as a threat to the survival of Islam in Afghanistan. At a special meeting in January 1980, the Conference attacked Moscow in harsher tones than the UN resolution and put the force of Islamic unity behind Pakistan's refusal to recognize and negotiate with the new Kabul regime. Unwavering Islamic support for Pakistan's strong stand is one of the most important lasting effects of the occupation. [redacted]

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The occupation undermined years of Soviet efforts to use religion as a tool to woo Moslems abroad. Most Islamic countries have broken off religious contacts with the Soviet government-controlled Islamic organizations in the USSR. [redacted]

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For some Islamic countries, however, national interests have prevailed over religious sentiments. Such nations as Syria and Iraq have not let Islamic unity obstruct their military supply relationships with Moscow. Poorer members of the Islamic Conference remain interested in Soviet economic aid. [redacted]

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#### Pakistan and Iran

For Pakistan, more than for any other country, the new situation created by the Soviet Army's presence in Afghanistan has remained a central concern since the invasion. Pakistani refusal to endorse the Soviet concept of a settlement under UN auspices, as well as Iran's refusal to participate in UN talks, has prevented Moscow from drawing a veil of international sanction over its occupation. Pakistan insists on a fixed date for withdrawal of Soviet troops--which Moscow is unwilling to set because it knows that the Babrak regime cannot survive without its protection. Moscow regards the US-aided improvement of the Pakistani armed forces in the wake of the Afghanistan invasion to be against Soviet interests. [redacted]

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Iran's aid to the resistance, its refusal to have anything to do with the Kabul regime, and its insistence that mujahideen leaders be included in any political talks have helped frustrate Soviet efforts to consolidate control in Afghanistan. The impact on Iran has been obscured for the moment by its war against Iraq and tensions with the US and Gulf countries. Some Iranian leaders have warned, however, that

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once the Iraqi war is over Iran will make a greater effort to help the mujahideen in Afghanistan. The spirit of religious crusade now driving the war against Baghdad could be turned on Kabul. [redacted]

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### China

The occupation has encouraged a militant Chinese stand against Soviet influence in Asia. Beijing broke off an emerging political dialogue with Moscow following the invasion and posed the Soviet occupation as one of three obstacles to an improvement of relations when talks resumed in 1982. Afghanistan is mainly a negotiating ploy for Beijing, however, and would probably fall by the way were the USSR to offer concessions on the other two obstacles--the Soviet military buildup along China's borders, and Soviet support for the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea. The invasion strengthened an already developing trend toward defense cooperation between China and the US. [redacted]

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China probably was also encouraged by the occupation to make a new effort to improve relations with India. Although the sporadic talks on their disputed border that began in 1982 have not produced results, Moscow clearly views any easing of relations as potentially harmful to its interests in India. [redacted]

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### The West

The Soviet presence in Afghanistan, in combination with the fall of the Shah of Iran, has focused US attention on South Asia and the Gulf and consolidated support for the Central Command (earlier known as the Rapid Deployment Force) that had been planned since 1977 but implemented slowly. The invasion also reduced resistance in such countries as Somalia and Oman to the American use of military facilities. A new appreciation in the West of Moscow's willingness to use military force to achieve political goals stimulated NATO to speed up its own defense modernization and strengthened popular support for greater Western military preparedness. [redacted]

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Although most Western economic sanctions specifically tied to Afghanistan have lapsed, the invasion dealt the USSR a setback in its efforts to develop trade ties with the West and obtain access to Western technology. The argument for tighter controls on the transfer of technology with potential military utility was strengthened by such

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events as the appearance in Afghanistan of Soviet Army trucks from the Kama River plant; US technology in the plant was supposed to have been only for use for civilian vehicles. [redacted]

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On balance, the occupation has stiffened popular sentiment in the West against the USSR and contributed to a general reduction in the scope of government contacts. These effects have been fading with time, however. Countries like Japan and Australia that reduced official contacts following the invasion have recently begun to resume normal exchanges. [redacted]

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#### Potential Gains and Losses From Ending the Occupation

The atmospheric change in international relations that would be produced by a Soviet withdrawal would not quickly translate into substantially improved relations with the West. Enhanced Western defense efforts in the Persian Gulf region, responsive to the danger from Iran as well as the USSR, have developed considerable momentum that would be hard to check. The Soviets probably have little hope that Western technology restrictions would be eased, since they rest more on overall perceptions of Soviet military and economic strength in relation to the West than on actions in remote areas like Afghanistan. We do not believe economic relations with the West would change significantly.

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China would be unlikely to change its policies if the other major obstacles to improved Soviet relations were not removed. Moscow might hope for improved ties in the Third World, especially with Islamic countries, but this would have scant immediate effect on Soviet security and economic interests. [redacted]

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On the negative side, the Soviets probably calculate that, under present conditions, a departure of their troops would lead to the collapse of their client regime in Kabul, undermine Moscow's credibility as an ally, and discourage present and prospective clients elsewhere. It could even expose Soviet Central Asia to possible Islamic and ethnic demands for similar release from Russian control. Moscow almost certainly apprehends that, barring a major change in the current situation, withdrawal would be seen in the West as a Soviet retreat in the face of determined resistance and would encourage the West to step up pressure on Soviet interests elsewhere around the globe rather than create openings for renewed dialogue. [redacted]

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On balance, the Soviets probably see little immediate value in withdrawing from Afghanistan, little credit to be won in usable terms of diplomatic or economic concessions from the West or the Third World. In the 4 1/2 years since the outburst of worldwide outrage over the Soviet invasion, foreign attitudes toward the USSR have come to depend less upon Afghanistan than upon more recent and closer events like pressure on Poland and the KAL shootdown. Although the suppression of the Afghan resistance remains a complicating factor in foreign relations, Moscow probably no longer feels that it is paying the international price that it once did.

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